



Hudson River Sloop Clearwater, Inc.
Virtual Meeting via Zoom
October 15, 2022, at 9:30am

Present:

Board Members:

Sarah Armour
Peter Capek
~~Jeff Domanski (departing)~~
Mitzi Elkes
Joan Gaylord
Neil Gordon
~~Scott Greathead~~
Allen Gutkin

Samantha Hicks
Gareth Hougham
Arthur Jones
Aaron Mair
~~Jennifer McMillan~~
Henry Neale
Jeremy Rainer
~~Dan Riesel~~

Larry Rothbart
Steve Stanne
Donna Stein
Rosemary Thomas
Sarah Underhill
Greg Williams
Thomasina Winslow
(~~strike through~~ indicates absence)

Board Candidates:

Steve Kielar

Tom Murphy

Staff and Members:

Jeremy Baron
Hal Cohen
Anne Crowley
Roger D'Aquino
Fran Dunwell
Roy L Felshin
Violet Fernelius
Vincent Ferri
Manna Jo Green
Ruthie Gold

Allan Goldhammer
Manna Jo Greene
Martha Gotwals
Ben Kaminsky
Clay Hiles
Bradley Kerr
Erin Macchiaroli
Meryl Marcus
Meg Mayo
Ann Mellor

Victor Melville
Rick Nestler
Nora Porter
Linda Richards
Nicole Riche
Eli Schloss
Ajax Stavis
David Toman

ANNUAL MEETING

Call to Order:

Steve called the meeting to order at 9:30 and welcomed everyone to Clearwater's 2022 Annual Meeting. He asked folks to use 'chat' to enter questions for the Q&A session and said the meeting was being recorded.

Linda Richards opened with a song, 'Sailing Up My Dirty Stream'.

Steve said a Strategic Plan, adopted last December, is intended to establish a path to stability and sustainability over three years. The goal is to not only survive, but to prosper in years to come. Steve said today's presentations are going to assess progress on realizing the plan's priorities, highlighting successes and acknowledging challenges that remain. Steve thanked the Staff for their hard work in putting the presentations together and also for their behind the scenes support for today's meeting.

Steve introduced Board members. Arthur Jones introduced the 2022 Board candidates and reminded everyone that the poll is open until 11:00am.

Staff Reports

David Toman, Executive Director, speaking on 'Rebuilding Strategically', began by expressing his appreciation of the talented and dedicated staff, with a special thank you to Erin, Meg, Ruthie and Manna. David said the Strategic Plan is our starting point for our mission and vision, which is focused on the Hudson River, including the people, communities, and threats presented by climate change. David said the sloop is our greatest and most recognized asset and draws attention on the water. David continued that our education and environmental action efforts must be closely aligned, and they are. He said music and celebration is a vital asset that must be strengthened as that is how we rally people together to tackle the issues we want to promote.

David said the Strategic Plan was focused on seven areas, four programmatic and three managerial, and spoke briefly to each: A-the sloop and our education programs, B-environmental advocacy work, C-integrating music into our work in sustainable ways, D-promote opportunities for community participation, E- secure the necessary resources for fiscal stability, F-professionalism and discipline in management processes, and G-effective messaging.

In the program areas, David highlighted the sloop winter refit project on the sloop, which was expanded over a longer period of time (October to June) and cost roughly \$400k, much of that covered by a OPRHP reimbursement grant. David noted that unusual issues, such as covid and associated supply chain impacts, resulted in delayed Coast Guard certification. He said the fall sloop season was fully booked for education programs and public sails. David added that we ran with a very lean crew this year and need to rebuild crew next year. The Environmental Action department was challenged by the loss of Environmental Advocate position, managing with support from interns and parttime staff. Looking ahead, a special EA planning committee is charting the course for EA's future direction and the EA Committee's charge. A Music and Celebration Committee is working to re-establish music and celebration in our community engagement and is pursuing a possible single day event in Kingston in spring 2023. One big challenge is, with current budget constraints, there is no employee position to oversee the program and it will initially rely on volunteers. We are also investigating the possible donation to Clearwater of a church property in Kingston.

David identified fiscal stability as our biggest, and time urgent, issue, stressing the need to change the paradigm and increase our resource capacity. He spoke to actions taken to address issues with financial reporting and improve internal controls, using expertise from CPA firms to help guide this process. Much catchup work is underway. Looking forward, once caught up, we need to share that with significant donors, grantors, and foundations. David shared cash stability targets for the organization, including an average cash balance of \$200k, a Century Fund revolving approximate balance of \$250k, and a seeded endowment and opportunity to direct legacy giving to is. David said every year we need to do our best to operate at a net surplus.

David shared what he's learned in his ten months at Clearwater, including that so many adults connected with Clearwater got their start as kids in our education program and so many environmental leaders in the Hudson Valley got their start with Clearwater. These are true success stories on how we inspire the next generation of environmental leaders.

He noted that fifty years after the passing of the Clean Water Act, we have all benefited from a cleaner Hudson River and we all will continue to reap the rewards over the next 50 years from our efforts to educate about, and protect and restore the Hudson, its tributaries, and its communities.

David concluded with takeaways for the Board – fundraise, fundraise, fundraise. Keep your circle of influence engaged with Clearwater, support development staff with communications and thank yous, stay informed and share often. Participate on committees, volunteer for events, sail on the sloop.

Erin Macchiaroli, Director of Operations, introduced staff, highlighted changes, and said it's been a year of growth, with focus on Strategic Plan implementation, in particular Priority F, management processes. Erin said the entire staff recognizes and appreciates the expertise David Toman brings to Clearwater. Erin touched on changes such as a new chart of accounts and new Quickbooks account, with the whole administrative staff, including the Sloop Administrative Liaison, trained on these. Additional highlights are an Employee Handbook update is underway, a new health care brokerage is helping us research some ancillary benefits for staff, and, with a connection through Ruthie, we secured two pro bono relationships. Work continues on a backlog of unreconciled financials from prior years.

Meg Mayo, Director of Development and Marketing, spoke on Communications, connecting it with Strategic Plan priority G, effective messaging, and emphasizing the importance of building public recognition of Clearwater's efforts and achievements. Meg highlighted the interdepartmental communications team, spoke to some of the challenges faced, and announced a full time Communications Coordinator, Amber Stewart, starts 10/24. Meg shared communication goals, the toolkit, channels, metrics, segmentation, and strategy. Meg spoke about engaging with new constituents through events, highlighting recent events that all brought in new email signups and new people to our contacts list.

Meg said that learning from the 'Our River Connects Us' campaign continues to support our expanding social media presence, illustrating the importance of holding on to existing staff. Crew based content continues to have greatest organic impact and drove our first viral moment on TikTok, with more than one million views! Clearwater received 13 group sail applications from folks who heard about us through social media.

Meg summarized that Communications Coordinator will bring much needed project management to the Communications team, that professional volunteers who can provide support as advisors/strategists/coaches could be used, and the Strategic Plan is our roadmap.

Ruthie Gold, Programs Department Director, spoke on education as well as the sloop. She introduced the team and gave shout outs to the crew. Ruthie said this was year of rebuilding strategically and addressed three areas - bringing programs back after the pandemic, grants, and work on the sloop. With two weeks left on the season, we have delivered 35 education sails, 18 public sails, 10 charter sails, 39 tideline programs, 1 spectator event, achieved an unprecedented social media presence, and served over 3,416 program participants. We have started to bring back programs stopped during the pandemic, as well as adding new things. Ruthie noted our fiscal reporting challenges have impacted applying for new grants and held up grants we are awarded. Turning to sloop maintenance, this past winter's refit, which including rebuilding the mast step as well as work on framing and planks topside (above the waterline), was planned to align with Coast Guard inspection requirements for mast step inspection every 10 years. This coming winter will have a much smaller team addressing necessary concerns. Ruthie noted the Coast Guard mandates a haul out every two years, and projected a handful of planks being replaced in the winter of 2023 and a more significant work scope in 2025.

Ruthie summarized that despite challenges (funding, school bus driver shortages, abbreviated sailing season, small crew, and weather), a full summer and fall sailing season were delivered and more people and communities served than since the pandemic. Ruthie identified goals for next year as a second Captain, more onboard crew, and up to date fiscal reporting to allow grant applications and install donor confidence.

Steve reminded folks that voting closes at 11.

Manna Jo Greene, Environmental Action Director, said it's been a challenging year and spoke to Strategic Plan Priority B, focus and strengthen our Environmental Action platform, working in concert with the sloop and education programs to foster environmental stewardship. Manna expressed gratitude for Jen Benson's part time support and acknowledged the work of the EA Committee. Manna spoke about work on the decommissioning of Indian Point, the PCB remediation community advisory group (so important as people still eat fish from the river), the Stop Danskammer coalition, emerging contaminants (in particular PFAS), fish advisories (including outreach to communities), and promoting the NY-NJ Watershed Protection Act and 2022 Environmental Bond Act. Manna said that while global in nature, climate change is the biggest single challenge facing the Hudson River and mitigating the impacts must be an essential part of Clearwater's EA. Clearwater hosted four regional municipal training solar siting workshops, spent a week at the Ulster County Fair on Climate Row doing outreach with a table on fish advisory information, and provided comments on NY's Climate Action Draft Scoping plans.

Looking ahead, Manna said the goal is to tie climate directly to the NY watershed and focus on resilience and on educating riverfront communities to prepare. Manna said the DEC has a wonderful tool and Clearwater does great outreach and we need to coordinate that, as well as emphasize the disproportionate impact of environmental harm on disadvantaged communities, and work with those communities to find solutions. Lastly, Manna thanked a number of people.

Donna Stein, Chair of the Sloop Club Committee, said the Sloop Clubs bring the spirit of Clearwater to our individual areas, and were imagined as independent of the main organization, but reflective of it. Donna shared how each sloop club helps amplify Clearwater's message. Goals for the coming year are to help each other more and to help build membership.

Meg Mayo, Director of Development and Marketing, said the department is fully aligned with the Strategic Plan and positioning to rebuild. The department eagerly awaits the up-to-date financial reports, expected in the near future, so they can be shared with donors and foundations to instill confidence. Meg said that 2022 YTD development revenue is 7% over budgeted revenue, exceeding 2021 but not yet returned to pre-pandemic numbers. Development makes up about half of Clearwater's total annual revenue. Membership is up significantly over 2021. Sustaining donors (monthly giving) is up and we are looking forward to growing this more.

Highlights this year included a return to a joyous in-person Gala at the Garrison, a members survey with over 500 responses, two Patron Fish sails, and an inaugural Hike for the Hudson. Meg noted we were challenged to properly follow-up on the survey, driven by capacity, but it was very interesting to read all the responses.

Meg said the challenge for department is really capacity, and that while many goals were achieved, some key areas had to be scaled back, such as business sponsorship cultivation, donor cultivation events/community gatherings, and personalized donor stewardship. Meg stated that while all existing live grants are up to date and relationships with those existing funders have been reestablished, the grants pipeline has been profoundly disrupted by financial reporting challenges. Meg added that, as part of rebuilding, areas where help would be appreciated include events planning and execution, business and corporate relations development, grants research, graphics design, and website/wordpress work.

Keynote Speaker: Fran Dunwell

Steve introduced Fran Dunwell, Coordinator of DEC's Hudson River Estuary Program until her recent retirement. Fran oversaw the program's evolution from basically a fisheries management program into an institution that really is at the heart of efforts to conserve the tidal Hudson and the extraordinary natural heritage of the river and its watershed. Steve said Fran's lasting success as estuary coordinator rested on her ability to value input from and engage in partnerships with many diverse stakeholders along the river. Fran is a lifelong resident of the valley and author of two books.

Fran said she was honored to address Clearwater, a group that inspired and led her on a path that culminated in her recent retirement from DEC after almost 50 years working on the conservation of the Hudson River. Fran gave a historical perspective, from the early 1970s up to today, sharing insights from working with a wide array of stakeholders. She said a brief stint at a non-profit, before joining DEC, made her realize the importance of non-profits in terms of setting an agenda government responds to and the importance of government being able to communicate with the average person.

Fran shared how dramatically the river has changed since the 1970s, when raw sewage and industrial waste were commonplace, to a river where people now swim. She walked us through how the Clean Water Act paved the way for investment to clean up the river, how grassroots organizations such as Clearwater, Riverkeeper, and Scenic Hudson were formed in that timeframe. Moving to the 1980s, she spoke to how the Hudson River Foundation was created out of an agreement not to build a power plant at Strom King Mountain, the federal government designated a National Estuarine Research Reserve consisting of four Hudson River wetland sites, and NYS passed a coastal management and local waterfront revitalization program. Fran observed things go in waves and the 1980s-1990s were a unique period. The Hudson River Estuary Program created in 1987 by state law.

Under Fran's leadership, the Estuary Program grew from a one person operation in 1974 to the organization it is today. Fran emphasized the importance of being able to talk with people of all political backgrounds or philosophies. Fran noted that while she was brought in by a Democratic governor, it was a Republican administration, under Governor Pataki, that put the wind in the sails with a \$6M budget that enabled studies to understand fish populations and river habitats and how they might be restored, to make science based decisions, and to improve access to the river through improvements in public parks and repair of boat ramps. She said people love the Hudson for the way it inspires them. Looking ahead, Fran spoke to the environmental bond act on the November ballot and hoped everyone would flip their ballot over and vote yes.

Fran said Clearwater has been a pipeline of talent for the Estuary Program. She noted the Estuary Program has developed strong partnerships with the Cary institute, Cornell University, and the Hudson River Foundation to continually study conservation needs and identify management priorities. Fran said perhaps partnerships is something for Clearwater to think about, increasing the level of participation and knowledge of people so they can be more effective stewards. Fran noted one of Clearwater's core expertise is in education.

Fran said the Estuary Program really helped to empower local groups to implement the best practices DEC advocated for and their work on land use is now helping dozens of communities implement natural resource inventories to change the way we relate to our streams. Fran said Manna Jo Greene was a key person and crucial ally in this. Fran said the Hudson Watershed Alliance was actually born at Clearwater and later spun off. As a result, DEC is now actively removing dams, rightsizing culverts, and working to improve stream habitats. Fran said that a lot came out of the Estuary Program's line item in the state budget.

Fran said strategic planning is one of her strengths and she is glad Clearwater is embracing it. Having been on the Estuary Program for 40 years, it was apparent you need to change with the changing times. Fran noted there was an increasing expectation from the public for the government to be accountable, so they set a strategic plan with metrics, tracked those metrics, and reported on it. Fran emphasized the importance of a strategic plan and also the importance of patience when working on the environment, giving the example that just now the river in the Albany area is becoming swimmable.

In 2006, leaders were convened to discuss climate resilience and the niche we could occupy was identified as understanding how climate change will affect the ecology of the river and helping communities prepare.

Wrapping up, Fran said the Hudson River Estuary Program continued to grow and evolve thanks to an extremely capable staff. She said the river is definitely cleaner, and all that effort and money has paid off with results but that does not mean the work is done. Fran said her hope is this brief history gives a sense of hope and optimism.

Fran said Clearwater stands for something, inspires people and makes the world a better place. She said the new strategic plan and adapting to changing times are essential and she forward to seeing the process unfold.

Steve thanked Fran for an inspiring talk, giving a sense of what it used to be, the work that's been done, Clearwater's role in that, and her hopes for the future

Q&A session – moderated by Steve:

a) Steve asked about the ecological impacts of the barrier system being proposed for NY harbor, or perhaps up the river, to mitigate storm surges. Fran wondered how the salt content is going to change, as fish spawning in the Hudson require specific salinities and also as communities, for example Poughkeepsie, take drinking water from the Hudson. Fran said rising sea level pushes salt up, but increased rainfall pushes salt down. The DEC is trying to understand the salt front, its position, and how that will affect the ecology of the river and communities' drinking water. Fran said rainfall and drought are both part of the new climate scenario affecting the river. Fran also noted that many of the Hudson's riverfront communities are already at sea level and questioned what will happen to them, and to public access to the river, and to docks, with climate change, sea level rise, and coastal flooding.

b) Violet Fernelius asked about the Atlantic sturgeon. Fran said the sturgeon, a signature fish for the Hudson, a bit like a pork chop when eaten, and which can grow to 14ft in Hudson, is commonly seen now at 8ft long. She said there was a period when sturgeon was being overfished and, based on studies funded by the Hudson River Foundation, a moratorium on sturgeon was put in place in 1996. As reproductive maturity for sturgeon is very long (12 years for males, 15-20 for females), recovery will take time, but Fran thinks the population is rebuilding and this will be a success story. Steve shared a high resolution side sonar scan taken a few years ago by researchers and showing a 14.1 foot adult and three other, smaller, adults on the river bottom.

c) Gareth Houghton asked about plans to modify the path of the Champlain power express, to bring it out of the river. Manna said the Champlain Hudson power express, though controversial, is likely to go forward. While Donna Stein has raised serious concerns about potential impacts on the river, Aaron Mair has raised important reasons why the project should proceed. Manna would like to see studies. Clearwater has not taken a position because the pros and cons essentially cancel each other. Manna is not aware of any current litigation that would stop it.

Steve again thanked Fran for a tremendous talk.

Break

Strategic Plan

Steve said significant progress has been made in year one of the three year plan and spoke briefly on board initiatives in support of plan goals. He said a thought provoking group is focused on integrating music in sustainable ways and has gotten interest from Radio Kingston and the City of Kingston for a one day mini festival next spring, along the Rondout. Volunteers will be needed. Steve said Revival is being looked at and also put in a plug for an upcoming concert for Clearwater in Rosendale on Nov. 6th. Speaking to the goal of securing the necessary resources, Steve highlighted one big achievement was hiring an Executive Director with the critical skills to address those needs as well as our program needs. Steve thanked the search committee, which was a board function, to bring David on. Steve also thanked the Development Committee for their efforts and the numerous board members who participated in fundraising this year.

Sam Hicks, speaking to professionalism in management processes, said reviewing our policies is slow, unglamorous, but very necessary and it is happening. Sam spoke to the importance of thoughtful, deliberate actions, and how patience pays off when we get to the end result that we want.

Thanks for departing board member

Steve thanked Jeff Domanski, who was active in the EA committee and Janine Napierkowski and Gregory Simpson who left for necessary reasons earlier in this term. Both Janine and Gregory were part of the search committee that brought David on board.

Election Results

Board members elected:

Neil Gordon (329 votes)
Steve Kielar (340 votes)
Tom Murphy (334 votes)
Sarah Underhill (355 votes)

(Note: vote counts were added after the meeting.)

OCTOBER MEETING (New Board) CONVENED

Call to order

Steve called the meeting to order at 12:30. The new board was present.

Vote to approve the officers

Steve read the proposed slate for the Officers for the 2021-2022 year:

Steve Stanne – President
Samantha Hicks – Vice-President
Rosemary Thomas – Secretary
Neil Gordon – Treasurer

A MOTION was made by Larry Rothbart, and seconded by Arthur Jones, to add the proposed slate to the ballot. It was agreed to accept the entire slate of officers with a single vote. The slate passed by a vote of 17 'yes' votes (Donna Stein, Mitzi Elkes, Aaron Mair, Rosemary Thomas, Joan Gaylord, Neil Gordon, Thomasina Winslow, Sarah Armour, Sarah Underhill, Peter Capek, Larry Rothbart, Arthur Jones, Sam Hicks, Henry Neale, Steve Stanne, Jeremy Reiner, Gareth Hougham) and one 'no' vote (Greg Williams).

Vote to elect Nominating Committee

Steve read the proposed names for the nominating committee for the new year:

Arthur Jones
Sarah Underhill

Larry Rothbart made a MOTION, seconded by Neil Gordon, to put the slate in. The slate passed by a vote of 16 'yes' votes (Donna Stein, Mitzi Elkes, Rosemary Thomas, Joan Gaylord, Neil Gordon, Thomasina Winslow, Sarah Armour, Sarah Underhill, Peter Capek, Larry Rothbart, Sam Hicks, Henry Neale, Steve Stanne, Jeremy Reiner, Gareth Hougham) and one 'no' vote (Greg Williams).

Vote to approve Member-at-Large for Executive Committee

Steve read the proposed names for the coming year:

Mitzi Elkes
Arthur Jones
Henry Neale

Larry Rothbart made a MOTION to approve the slate and Donna Stein seconded. The slate passed by a vote of 16 'yes' votes (Donna Stein, Mitzi Elkes, Aaron Mair, Rosemary Thomas, Joan Gaylord, Neil Gordon, Thomasina Winslow, Sarah Armour, Sarah Underhill, Peter Capek, Larry Rothbart, Sam Hicks, Henry Neale, Steve Stanne, Jeremy Reiner, Gareth Hougham) and one 'no' vote (Greg Williams).

Schedule for future board meetings

Steve presented the proposed calendar. A vote was held and the calendar was unanimously approved.

The approved schedule is:

Wednesday, November 9, 2022

Tuesday, December 6, 2022

Thursday, January 12, 2023

Wednesday, February 8, 2023

Thursday, March 9, 2023

Tuesday, April 4, 2023

Wednesday, May 10, 2023

Tuesday, June 6, 2023

Thursday, July 13, 2023

Tuesday, August 8, 2023

Wednesday, September 6, 2023

Sunday, October 1, 2023; 9:30 AM – 1:00 PM – Annual Meeting

Adjourn

Steve thanked Meg Mayo and Ruthie Gold for pulling together the logistics of today's meeting and all the staff for the presentations full of useful information on our successes and the challenges for the coming year. Kudos to all.

Linda Richards shared a closing song by Joy Oladokun, 'Look Up'.

Sam moved to adjourn and it was seconded by Aaron.

The meeting ended at 1:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Rosemary Thomas, Secretary